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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [EAID](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA - TFG PRIME MINISTER WORRIED ABOUT RIVAL
ORGANIZATION, ANXIOUS FOR USG HELP

REF: NAIROBI 1037

Classified By: Somalia Unit Counselor Bob Patterson. Reasons: 1.4 (b,d
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11. (S/NF) Summary: In a brief Nairobi airport meeting May 28, TFG Prime Minister Sharmarke worried about the influence of rival organization Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a and the failure of talks in Mogadishu and Addis Ababa to result in an agreement to cooperate. Sharmarke confirmed that communications and logistics problems had undercut the TFG's initially successful counter-attack in Mogadishu on May 22, and requested radios and military advice to prevent a recurrence of the problems. The Prime Minister repeatedly confirmed the TFG's willingness to accept any negative publicity that might result from a U.S. military strike on terrorists or their training camps in Somalia should such strikes occur. The TFG, said Sharmarke, was looking for money to pay security force salaries for June. In a subsequent meeting with UNPOS Deputy Charles Petrie, the Prime Minister asked assistance in getting the Government of Iraq to make good on its pledge of USD 5 million in aid to his government. The Prime Minister was grateful for the Secretary's May 27 telephone call to President Sheikh Sharif, which he had listened in on and which "really bolstered our spirits." Sharmarke was briefly in Nairobi en route to Tripoli at the invitation of Qadhafi. End summary.

Lessons of May 22 Counter-Attack

12. (C) During a brief stopover in Nairobi May 28 while en route to Libya, a relaxed TFG Prime Minister Omar Sharmarke told Somalia Unit officers that his government's troops had fared well in the initial stages of their counterattack against insurgents in Mogadishu on May 22. After taking significant parts of Mogadishu (reftel), TFG troops had been forced to retreat, however, when its Uganda-trained contingent found itself near the Industrial Road area and far in advance of other TFG units. Inaccurate information passed by cellphone, the troops' only means of communication, caused the Uganda-trained soldiers to believe they had been cut off from other TFG soldiers, and they beat a hasty retreat, Sharmarke said. The May 22 counteroffensive, although ultimately unsuccessful, showed that security force their considerable weaknesses: communications, logistics, and battlefield command. Sharmarke requested USG assistance in procuring walkie talkies and other battlefield communications equipment and any training that could be provided the TFG's field commanders. He welcome the suggestion that experienced Rwandan or Ugandan trainers be detailed, if possible, to Mogadishu to lead intensive courses.

Praise for IGAD Communique

¶3. (C) Sharmarke was philosophical about progress al-Shabaab and other insurgents had made against the TFG in recent weeks. The TFG, he maintained, was keeping the door open to "reasonable guys," while al-Shabaab's reliance on foreigners was costing it support among Somalis. Sharmarke praised the May 20 IGAD ministerial communique's call for control of Somali airports and ports, and alleged that it had triggered al-Shabaab's efforts, via incursions into Medina to win control of Mogadishu airport.

Foreigners Fighting

¶4. (S/NF) Sharmarke joined other Somalis in alleging significant foreign involvement in al-Shabaab's efforts. A "Pakistani general" was coordinating the attacks on the TFG in Mogadishu, he said. Also present was an alleged al-Qaida operative he was able to identify only as "al-Libi." Sharmarke noted that he was keeping indirect tabs on Muhtar Robow, but no one in the TFG, to his knowledge, had had contact since Robow's resignation as al-Shabaab spokesman. Sharmarke described considerable stress between Hisbul Islam and al-Shabaab, with Hassan Dahir Aweys allegedly "shocked" by al-Shabaab's "lack of a strategy other than fighting."

ASWJ Negotiations Faltering

¶5. (C) The TFG's negotiations with Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (ASWJ) had produced no results to date, according to Sharmarke. He described the Somalia central region

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representatives they had been in contact with as "determined to make gains quickly on the ground," so that those gains could be parlayed into an improved negotiating position with the TFG. Although the TFG had provided some money to ASWJ, all assistance was now stalled, with some in the TFG worried that TFG cash was feeding a potential rival. ASWJ continued to push for high-profile ministerial positions and to stall on active cooperation with the TFG. Sharmarke was not certain what pressure the Government of Ethiopia could exert on ASWJ, but he several times urged the USG to do what it could to bring ASWJ around.

Money Needs

¶6. (C) The Prime Minister promised an accounting shortly of the USD 500 thousand provided by the USG. He as very grateful for USG efforts to supply TFG forces with larger-caliber ammunition and weapons. The TFG had subsidized allies in Hiraan and Jowhar, as well as having provided stipends to an unspecified number of "al-Shabaab defectors." His government believed it was safer if the technicals that belonged to mercurial warlords Mohammed Dheere and Indha Adde were safely in TFG control, and negotiations were now under way to that end. Sharmarke estimated the total number of technicals at 18, in addition to one APC. He noted that their purchase would place significant additional strain on the TFG's finances and asked continued USG support. (In a subsequent brief conversation with UNPOS Deputy Charles Petrie, Sharmarke urged UN and USG intercession with Iraq to speed the delivery of an alleged USD 5 million that the Baghdad government had pledged to the TFG.)

Support for Kinetic Strikes

¶7. (S/NF) Sharmarke recalled that he had called Somalia Unit on May 16 to urge that the USG "take out" if possible participants in an al-Shabaab - Hisbul Islam conclave near Afgoye. That phone call, he re-affirmed, had been made with the express consent of President Sheikh Sharif, who also believed with Sharmarke that and USG strikes on known

terrorists or their training camps was necessary. Asked if the TFG could weather the fallout from such a strike or strikes and their potential collateral damage Sharmarke, without hesitation said, "yes." "These people," he said, "are out to destroy our way of life."

Travel Plans

¶8. (C) Sharmarke was en route to Libya at the invitation of Qadhafi and in place of President Sharif, whom Ambassador Ranneberger, in a May 26 telephone call, had strongly discouraged from leaving Mogadishu during this stressful time.

Comment

¶9. (C) Sharmarke, like President Sharif in our recent telephone contacts with him, was calm and convinced that the TFG could prevail against its enemies. He philosophically acknowledged the many basic problems confronting his government, from forging an alliance with ASWJ to ironing out command and control and logistical problems in its fragile security forces. His dismissive comments about al-Shabaab's reported increasing reliance on foreign fighters, ironically, mirror al-Shabaab's accusations that the TFG is over-reliant on the foreign fighters of AMISOM as it haltingly tries to increase its hold on Mogadishu.

RANNEBERGER